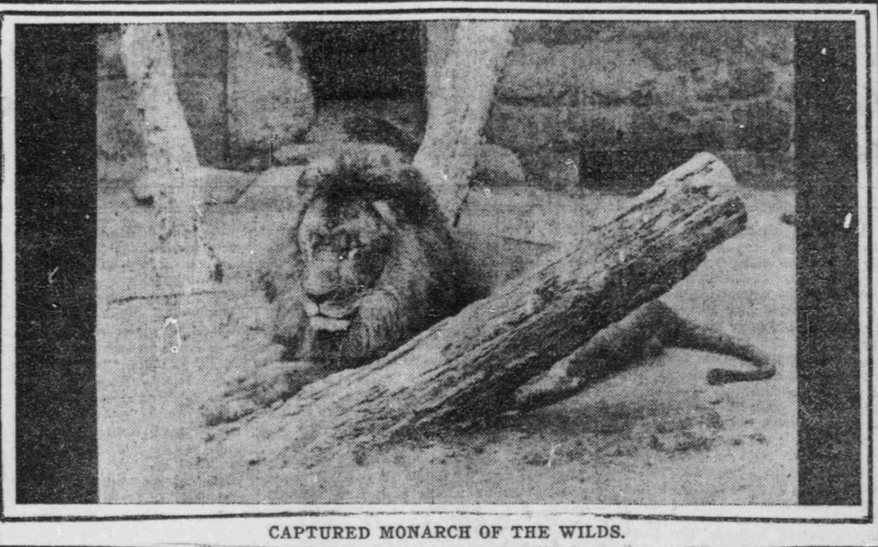
A QUARTER CENTURY'S SERVICE WITH THE BIG CATS OF THE ZOO

SPRAWLED AT HIS EASE.
A Tiger Who Has Passed His Majority, and Is One of the Largest Representatives of His Race in Captivity.



CAPTURED MONARCH OF THE WILDS.

A VERY UNWILLING PRISONER.
A Big Cat Who Bears Watching, and Forgetfulness of Whom Means Danger or Death.

Principal Keeper W. H. Blackburne, Who Has Grown Up With Lions and Tigers, Has Countless Stories, Grave and Gay, to Relate.

FOURTEEN years as trainer and assistant superintendent of menagerie with Barnum & Bailey, and more than a dozen as principal keeper of the National Zoological Park, ought to give a man some acquaintance with the traits and habits of animals, from the smallest to the greatest—from the most timid to the most ferocious. Add to such an experience a natural fondness for the great beasts he handles so easily and gently and a natural aptitude for the work, and you have a man who can speak on these subjects with the voice of one having authority.

Out at the Zoo the man is to be found—by those who have business. That his remarkable and unusual accomplishments should be regarded as a part of the exhibit W. H. Blackburne would bitterly resent; there are few persons so filled with interesting and exciting reminiscences from whom it is so difficult to secure the details of these dramatic events. It is just possible that from long companionship with the captured monarchs of the wilds Mr. Blackburne has caught something of their characteristics; at any rate he shrinks from publicity and hesitates long and diffidently before he will consent to tell even a small part of that which he knows.

Once started, however, he talks with animation—animation that increases as memory urges and the old drama of incessant incident sweeps across his mind. If he be somewhat skeptical as to the remarkable animal stories with which newspapers and magazines nowadays are flooded, it is not, perhaps, a matter for wonderment, for he lacks both the incentive to self-advertisement and the desire to make a living outside the duties of his business. Indeed, these animal romances make him rather more than gently weary.

Rot About the Animals.

"There is a lot of rot told and written about the habits of animals and their occasional exhibitions of remarkable intelligence," says Mr. Blackburne. "Everything that happens to any one of them in the menageries and zoos of the country is worked for all the advertising there is in it, and some truly remarkable literary productions have been the result of the system. It's just possible that in the old days I was responsible for some of this sort of thing myself, but now it makes me ill to read these alleged descriptions of what some animals do. I know too much about them and their habits.

"There is little reason for all this, for in fact the truth about animals is sometimes interesting enough. It is when everyday incidents are magnified to the importance of events and used to deceive the credulous public into the belief that they are either dangerous or unusual that I begin to get tired. When you read all these stories about getting stray bits of bone out of the lion's teeth or trimming the tiger's claws, you may be at least reasonably sure that an industrious press agent has been busily at work.

"These things are so simple and easy and of such everyday occurrence they excite no comment whatever in any real zoo or menagerie. When we perform these little operations out here we select a rainy day, when there just as few people as possible about. When generous advertising is desirable, however, there is always plenty of excitement and the animal patient is made to go through his paces for the instruction and admiration of the crowd."

By Love of Adventure.

It was the love of adventure—of the strange and unusual and the play of rapid incident—that led Mr. Blackburne to join Barnum & Bailey. He confesses he got what he was looking for in abundant measure and that when the first attraction had worn away and the business become a business, pure and simple, he was not very sorry to get out of it. But the love of animals and the knowledge of their habits linger and are put to practical and valuable use every day in caring for the valuable collection the Government has gathered from every part of the earth and placed in the park.

Much of Mr. Blackburne's time as a trainer of animals was spent in the company of what he calls "big cats," the animals, that is, of the tiger and lion species and others of similar characters and traits. He has had lots of experiences with them, some amusing, some that escaped being tragic by a very narrow margin only.

"Of all the cats," he says, "I like the lion best. They are more easily trained and much more straightforward than the tigers. A lion is either good or bad; you can either mold him to your wishes—when you see that you can—or you can do nothing at all with him—when you see that you cannot. Some are entirely vicious and their animosity never ceases; some are tractable, come to know their trainer and attendant, and to yield ready obedience to his commands.

"On the other hand, it is never possible to guess even what a tiger is going to do; he not only bears watching, but demands it, and he is a very ignorant or careless trainer that forgets to keep his eye on the beast all the time. If he does forget, he is very likely to be brought suddenly back to earth, with such injuries, perhaps, as will serve to keep him there a good, long while.

"But he did, in time. After a parade one day I was trying to get out of the cage, something it is always wise to do with some care. I stepped from the cage toward the wooden platform, which ran below it, swinging on to the side bars with ond hand, and trying to close the door with the other. In some way I managed to miss the platform, and to catch one foot inside the closing door.

"The door stood six or eight inches ajar, and in a second the lion was after me. I had to hold on to the side of the cage to keep from falling, and to the door to keep it from being pulled open, and there I hung, with my foot inside, and the big paw of that old cat striking within an inch of my face and coming closer with each stroke. I thought I was a goner.

"Every half moment I expected to be minus a foot, but for some reason the lion did not notice his opportunity, and confined himself to wild efforts to reach my face. This he could not reach, and I was rescued by some of the men in the tent, and helped to a place of safety.

Each Rule Has Exception.

"But in training animals there is no rule without its exception and the successful trainer takes into account the individual peculiarities of every animal he tries to teach a lesson. Some it is necessary to whip, while others proudly refuse to receive the lash. It does not make things easier for the trainer to have one of the big cats with this trait in the same cage with others, whom it is necessary to whip in order to get them to go through their performance.

"I made the acquaintance once, however, of a big lion who would have thought his honor gone had he submitted to be whipped under any ordinary circumstances, who yet violated his rule on one memorable occasion. I remember it myself, because I was about as much scared then as I have ever been in my life.

"There are two towns in York State which are separated by a distance of only about two miles, so that it is customary for the parade to pass through both in one trip. When we were making the return trip from one of the towns back to that in which the lot was situated, there came up one of the most terrific thunderstorms I have ever witnessed. The peals of thunder were like the noise of a battle, and the lightning flashed all about.

Scared by the Thunder.

"I was in the cage with this lion of which I speak. I used to watch him pretty carefully, but care was not needed then. The big beast was so badly frightened he didn't know what to do. I was wearing a mountaineer's costume, with a kilt and thigh boots, and it finally occurred to the lion that the thing to do was to come and stick his head under the kilt. He did, and refused to move it, though I shoved him and yelled at him, and at last even used the whip. He just rubbed his great head against me, and kept where he was.

"You can imagine I was not very comfortable, and the fifteen minutes the storm lasted seemed to me like so many hours. When the storm broke the lion's spirit seemed broken, too, and it was several days before he recovered his old desire to get at me."

Terrified by the Unusual.

Mr. Blackburne doesn't think that with proper handling lion training is a very dangerous pastime, though he is quite willing to admit that there are moments of danger in the lion trainer's life. A study of each animal, with the resulting understand of his character, and a constant and watchful observance of ordinary precaution, he believes, will bring safety.

To illustrate how thoroughly the members of the cat family—no matter what their size or natural ferocity—are frightened by the occurrence of startling or unusual incidents, Mr. Blackburn tells a story of the burning of the winter quarters of the Barnum & Bailey circus, at Bridgeport, Conn., a score of years ago. It shows, too, that a good deal of the fear entertained by the human race inspired by these great beasts could be dispensed with very easily.

"It happened during the fire," Mr. Blackburne says, "that the man in charge of the lions got a case of fright himself, and opened the doors of all the cages. But one of the lions took advantage of the offered opportunity; he sprang from his cage and to the top of a pile of refuse near the quarters. He stood there, a picture of terror, with eyes and ears alert to every impression; his tail was stretched straight behind him, his mane stood on end. He stood there a moment, and then, as the crowd closed in around him or broke in flight, broke himself and took refuge in a shed. The policemen started in to fire at him, and he ran from the shed and, under cover of the smoke and general excitement, managed to make his way into the stable where an old Irish woman kept her cow.

Pounded With a Broom.

"He jumped at the cow, and the Irish woman saw him. For a moment she did not realize the identity of her unexpected visitor, and with the broom she chanced to have in her hands began an indignant attack upon the lion's ribs. She thought it was a big dog, and certainly had no idea of permitting any dog to molest her cow. When she at last understood her mistake she was overcome with fright, left the stable in a hurry, and locked the door behind her.

"Under such circumstances the lion was incapable of doing any further damage, and could easily have been captured and boxed had the showmen been notified. But the damage had been done, and the next morning a neighbor cut a hole in the roof of the shed and shot the lion with a rifle."

Perhaps the most easily frightened of all the animal kind are the gigantic elephants, a herd of which can be transformed into a very sea of riot and confusion by the smallest trifle. Mr. Blackburne has a score of anecdotes that prove this fact, and show what possibilities of serious danger to large numbers of persons reside in such chance mishaps.

"In Troy, N. Y.," he told the man from The Sunday Times, "the show suffered an experience of this kind that cost the owners $4,000 or $5,000. There was a coach dog, belonging to some one about the menagerie, that used to amuse itself by playing around the feet of the elephants. In some way he managed to frighten one of the herd, and without a moment's warning, the big fellow dashed through the tent and out into the night. He was sought for everywhere, we thought, but was not to be found, and the show had to go on, leaving a man to bring the elephant on when he was found.

Seared by Molten Iron.

"It was not until this man caught up with the show, bringing the elephant with him, that we learned anything of the animal's experiences that night. He had found a country road, it seemed, and dashed along it, still frightened, and in all probability frightening every man, woman and child that noticed that huge mountain of flesh moving swiftly along. Out in the suburbs he reached the neighborhood of a rolling mill, and, attracted by the bright light and the signs of human activity, made briskly for it.

"The puddlers were at work, the molten metal was all about, and great bars of steel and iron, heated to white heat, spanned the floor in every direction. The elephant, with his fright intensified by this strange scene, did not hesitate a minute, but dashed through, scattering the puddlers in consternation and searing even his thick coat on white-hot bars. He went far out into the country before he stopped and was finally caught.

"When he finally turned up he was as much chastened in spirit as any elephant whose acquaintance I ever enjoyed. He wasn't very handsome to look at, but in meekness and good behavior he more than made up for his lack of the fatal gift of beauty."

Mr. Blackburne tells a story of a herd of young elephants—little fellows—who became frightened one night just as they were returning to their quarters after the grand entrance. Without any apparent reason whatever they turned and dashed under the seats, so wildly frightened they had no idea what they were doing or where they were going. It was a very miracle that a dreadful calamity was averted, because, had they struck the uprights that supported the seats, hundreds of persons would have been killed almost certainly. In some strange fashion not a support was so much as touched and the entire herd emerged at the other end of the section. The circus attendants had been having heart disease from the moment of their disappearance.

Other Elephant Traits.

Mr. Blackburne has seen a herd of these big creatures thrown into a condition of fright almost pitiful by the unexpected appearance of an ordinary house cat—seen them so badly frightened that they tugged and pulled at their ropes and stakes and made every possible effort to get away. Only the escape of the cat, which, while frightened enough, was by no means so badly frightened as the elephants, averted a panic.

A JUNGLE BEAUTY IN CAPTIVITY.
Leopards Are Like the Tigers in the Matter of Training and Though They May Appear Docile Wait Constantly for a Chance to Make an Attack.

Lion That Gave Blackburne Fifteen Minutes' Unhappiness During a Storm--The Timid Elephants and the Damage They Do When Terror Urges.

"They have a vein of fun about them, too," Mr. Blackburne says. "Old Jumbo, about whom so many stories have been told that the very mention of his name nowadays may drive people away, was a practical joker of the first water. Matthew Scott, an Englishman, was his keeper, and they were great chums and inseparable companions. Scott slept in a little compartment partitioned off in the car in which Jumbo made his journeys, and Scott and the elephant talked all through the night. At least Scott talked, and he seemed to think Jumbo knew what he said.

"It was the old Englishman's custom to buy a pint of whisky and take it aboard the car. He would help himself to a drink first, and then give the rest of the bottle to Jumbo, and the big fellow would put it down with huge enjoyment. He had an equal fondness for beer, and Scott used to gratify this also. I think they did most of their drinking together.

"When Jumbo wanted to amuse himself he would stick his trunk through the door into Scott's part of the car and lift his blanket. When that palled on him he would get hold of his keeper's coat, or his hat, or his shoes, and stand there, rolling from side to side and munching the stolen property, while his little eyes twinkled with fun. Scott would swear at him in all he knew of three languages.

"'Gimme me 'at, blawst your bloomin' heyes!' he would say. 'Gimme me 'at.' But Jumbo would never move or let go, and Scott would have to relent.

"'All right, then; you'll be sorry for this, you great beast,' he would tell Jumbo, and then turn over on his side and go as nearly to sleep as the elephant would permit.

"Scott was heartbroken when Jumbo was killed at St. Thomas, Canada, and after the skeleton and skin of the mammoth were mounted he was kept in charge of them. He would talk to the stuffed skin, just as he had to Jumbo, when the elephant was alive."

From elephants to monkeys is a far cry; however, here goes:

"We had a little black monkey out here that was the wit of the Zoo," said Mr. Blackburne. "He was forever in mischief, and was never quite satisfied unless he was making some of the other animals absurd or unhappy. He was usually satisfied for his invention, so far as practical jokes is concerned, was practically unlimited.

"The principal butt of his ridicule and fun, though, was the hyena that occupied the adjoining cage. The hyena did not take it very well, and, of course, this pleased the monkey all the more. When other means of annoying the hyena failed, the monkey would station himself at the keyhole of the door between the cages, scratch on it to attract the hyena's attention, and when that curious animal stuck his head up against the keyhole, to find out what was the matter, the monkey would stick a straw into his eye.

"Sometimes the hyena was wise and the trick would fail, but often it succeeded, and when it did the monkey was nearly tickled to death. He would jump from one side of his cage to the other, swing by his fore-feet from the top, and scream and chatter and howl at the top of his voice."

The Case of Coon---An Exception in Department Life

Taken as an Example to Draw a Moral of the Usual Ones.

Developed Ambition in the Government Service and Rose.

IT must be a delightful sensation, when a rule is an unpleasant one, to be the exception that buttresses it with the convincing proof of the proverb. The very ambitious have a fondness for pointing the finger of scorn at the young men who succumb to temptation and accept Government clerkships and if a success be indicated to them—they sniff.

"There's Coon," the optimist will remark, cheerfully.

"An isolated case, my dear fellow, an isolated case, merely," the cynic will reply.

At any rate, here is what the "Boston Transcript" has to say about the "exception that proves the rule," or the "isolated case," or what you will:

The name of Charles E. Coon on the Republican State ticket of Washington as candidate for lieutenant governor calls up some interesting memories for the people of the Capital City, for it was here that Mr. Coon "grew up," as far as public life is concerned. It also suggests some reflections on the civil service as a career. Mr. Coon is a native of New York State, entered the volunteer army in the civil war, and came here to take a departmental clerkship before hostilities were fairly over. By successive promotions he rose from an insignificant place in the Treasurer's office to be assistant chief of the loan division in the office of the Secretary, and in that capacity made two trips abroad on Government business of the highest importance. The first time he went to London with Assistant Secretary Richardson to set afloat a 5 per cent loan—then deemed a very doubtful venture in national finance. The second time he went to take charge of the refunding negotiations under Secretary Sherman. In both enterprises he acquitted himself well, and when President Arthur and Secretary Folger were looking, in 1884, for a competent man to make an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Mr. Coon seemed to meet the requirements and he was named. On Secretary Folger's death later in the same year, and before Mr. McCulloch succeeded him, Mr. Coon fell heir for a time to the responsibilities of the head of the department. This was as high as a civil servant of the rank and file could hope to climb, and he was pointed out as a wonder in those days

When Misfortune Came.

It was naturally to be expected that when the time should arrive in due course for Mr. Coon to surrender his high office it would be to do well in a worldly sense. The occasion came some months after the installation of the first Cleveland Administration in 1885, and a nephew of Smith Weed claimed his place. It was assumed that a man who had been trusted with such responsibilities could move out of the Treasury only into a bank presidency or something of that sort, but instead, Coon entered the ill-fated Bateman firm in New York, the head of which was an ex-department clerk here who had developed speculative tendencies and graduated from a Treasury desk into Wall Street. It did not last more than five years after Coon entered it, and he found himself once more in search of something to do. There was a forlorn hope to be led in the Tenth Congressional district of New York in 1892 against General Sickles; Coon, as a man who knew something about Washington, was put forward by the Republicans on the mere ghost of chance of pulling through. He was beaten by 6,000 votes.

By the next spring he was ready to come back to this city and take an $1,800 berth in the War Department as confidential clerk to the Quartermaster General. This was one of the last appointments made by the Harrison Administration before going out of business. Coon was good-looking, dressed well, was always courteous, and carried himself, alike in fair and ill fortune, as if it were all sunshine on his side of the street. This made him popular in his set, which was largely drawn from local bachelordom. He had been back in Washington only a few months when he was elected president of the Columbia Athletic Club, which about that time was cutting a good deal of a dash. One day he was called over to New York on business. During his absence rumors began to float about of dissensions in the club management, apparently based on the administration of its business affairs, and from New York suddenly arrived a telegraphic dispatch announcing Coon's resignation of the presidency. Not long afterward he quitted this city once more, was heard of for a little while in New York, and then dropped out of sight again.

Took Greeley's Advice.

The next learned of him was that he had gone into business in Port Townsend, Wash., had done pretty well, and had become mayor of the city. He was a candidate for the third seat in the House of Representatives from Washington, but withdrew in convention in favor of the present occupant, Mr. Humphrey, of Seattle. Now he turns up as a candidate for lieutenant governor, with a very good chance of winning.

The moral of Mr. Coon's life history, if it has any, is probably that the Government service, while it answers very well as a cross-walk in getting over a trying period in a young man's life, is a very poor dependence as the opening for a career. The same ability, self-confidence and power to command the confidence of others which sent him as a young man on two important financial missions to the Old World would, if he had gone into legitimate banking at the time he went into the civil service, have put him at the head of some big institution in private business, where he would have been recognized as the right man in the right place. As it was, he had the two missions to his credit on the public record; and his achievements abroad won him a chance to fill for eighteen months a position of greater dignity where he was bound to figure only as a stop-gap. And this was the full measure of his reward for all the best years of his life spent in doing Uncle Sam's work.

But mark another stage in the philosophy of Mr. Coon's story. The youth who enters Government employ is almost inevitably bound to do one of two things—revolt against its limitations and get out while he still has the freshness of mind and the self-assurance to go into some other calling and do well in it, or stay where he is and acquire the "clerkly habit." The man who has once acquired that and reached middle life must have a strain of super-elastic nature in him if he is able to recover from its effects with a change of employment.

Hold of Clerkly Habit.

It is hard to define the clerkly habit without appearing to disparage a very worthy and deserving class of persons who have it. Perhaps it can best be described as the habit of looking at everything through the eyes of a superior, and, even in cases where one's advice is requested, effacing one's self immediately after giving it. This does not mean the suicide of individual opinion and initiative, but merely an induced attitude of mind whereby, for purposes of discipline, the subordinate assumes to act, in all important matters, merely as the eyes, ears, and hands of his superior. He may have his own notions of what is expedient and what inexpedient, and in cases that are turned over to him to settle at discretion he can act according to his best judgment. But he has trained himself to consider his personal notions a thing apart from the duties he is performing as the representative of a higher authority. And even where he is clothed with power to act independently, he has always present the sense that, after all, the final signature which gives validity to his work will be not his own, but his chief's; so that the difference between acting under instructions and at discretion resolves itself into a mere order of sequence—whether the approval shall precede his acts in the form of a command or follow them in the form of a ratification.

It requires no great discernment to see that this habit, once fixed upon a man, is not the sort of equipment to fit him for a struggle with the world. If he gets out of public employ while still at a plastic age, he can soon recover himself and do independent work, little if any the worse for his period of artificial training; if he stays in till his acquired traits have hardened, he must be made of pretty good stuff to live to outgrow its effect. Coon, who did not get out till forty-three, undoubtedly suffered, for a long period after his return to private life, from the influence of twenty years spent at a clerk's desk under the semi-military discipline of the Government service. During the latter part of his career he seems to have made up for lost time. It is probable that at sixty-two he is at last on his way to a position in life which he might just as well have had at forty but for the cramping effect of his initial mistake.

Cost of a London Fog.

THE area which a heavy fog covers in London determines the cost attending it. During the last winter several gas companies disposed of more than a million feet of gas for a single fog, the extra expenditure to the consumers collectively being $26,500. It has been stated that as much as $75,000 worth of additional gas has been consumed during a single day's fog.

There are likewise numerous accidents and delays to travelers, involving sums which it is difficult to estimate. On a very foggy day the street sellers of London are deprived of their custom, which may be fairly estimated at $15,000 a day. The loss sustained by cabmen is equally great. On the Metropolitan railways, during a day of heavy fog, about $1,500 is spent on fog signals alone, extra expenditure being likewise involved in providing plate layers to guard the lines. Altogether, we may safely estimate the collective cost of a London fog to be not less than $250,000.

DIED AND RE-DIED.

During the Boer war a British soldier, who had been reported killed in a certain battle and against whose name in the regimental book a note to that effect had been made, afterward turned up and reported himself. Then the sergeant made another note in the book. "Died by mistake." The man was placed in hospital, and a few weeks later succumbed to the injuries he had received. This fact was communicated to the sergeant through the colonel of the regiment, and then a third note was made. "Re-died by order of the colonel."